

Keeping You Posted

The UCC Office of Communication: Connecting the Gospel and Justice to Media, Churches and Community
UCC on the Web: www.ucc.org

Here is the Good News of the United Church of Christ, **especially edited for congregational publications**, with topical news of the wider church, helpful hints to strengthen members' faith and pride in the denomination and personal testimonies to stir the spirit. **Each story is short and complete and can stand alone, ready to drop into the weekly bulletin or the monthly newsletter.** The code at the end of some entries refers interested readers to a more comprehensive story in **United Church News**.

BECOME A WHOLE EARTH CHURCH

— With Eco-Justice Sabbath (April 19) and Earth Day (April 22) fast approaching, consider becoming a "Whole Earth Church." Local churches in the program, sponsored by the National Council of Churches, decide for themselves how to participate. Currently there are more than 100 Whole Earth churches in the United States. For information contact the NCC, 475 Riverside Dr., New York, NY 10115.

In the meantime, here are some suggestions for churches who wish to take a "green" approach to ministry:

- Use ecology themes in worship.
- Make church buildings energy efficient with periodic energy audits.
- Use few disposable items and no styrofoam; recycle.
- Use recycled paper.
- Encourage car pooling, bicycling, walking, and water conservation.
- Use cloth or biodegradable disposable diapers in church childcare facilities.
- Include stewardship of the Earth in the CE curriculum.
- Commit a portion of mission giving to whole earth programs or related organizations.

CHURCH LEADERS OPPOSE BOMBING — Acknowledging the suffering of Iraqis under the "horrible regime" of Saddam Hussein, the Rev. Paul H. Sherry, UCC president, and the Rev. Richard L. Hamm, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) general minister and president, sent a letter to President Clinton Feb. 17, urging him to consider alternatives to military force for the sake of those same Iraqi citizens. Iraq's people have been "victims of a murderous regime of economic sanctions that has already claimed the lives of over a half-million Iraqi children," wrote the church leaders. "Bombing Iraq will only make their lives more miserable."

"The Iraqi people have not made the fateful decisions that now make them the potential targets of a devastating air attack. Nor were they involved in any meaningful way in the earlier decision to invade Kuwait. It seems that the role assigned to them by their own government and by the international community is the role of victims, victims of the horrible regime of Saddam Hussein.

"We would urge you to consider alternatives to the current policy of isolating Iraq, beginning with a relaxation on restrictions on the importation of humanitarian goods."

Conference ministers meeting in Orlando, Fla., sent a similar letter Feb. 20.

NATIONAL TV-TURNOFF WEEK — In April, many folks in the United States will be voluntarily turning off their TV sets for seven days in order to rediscover how constructive, rewarding, healthy and relaxing life can be with more time and less TV. The organizers, TV-Free America, hope that participants will use the time to reassess television's role in their daily lives and to enjoy the non-television pleasures of life.

The fourth annual National TV-Turnoff Week takes place April 22-28 and is endorsed by 44 national religious, educational and health associations. An organizer's kit is available for \$10 from TV-Free America, 1611 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 3A, Washington, DC 20009.

Churches, schools and study groups also can use the UCC Office of Communication guidebook and video, "Kids Talk TV: Inside/Out." "Kids Talk TV" is a media literacy curriculum developed to help youth and young adults become critical consumers of media. The curriculum runs \$79.95 + \$6 s&h and is available from the UCC Office of Communication, 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115; 216/736-2222.

UCC-AMISTAD CONNECTION HELPS SIERRA LEONE — In January, the Rev. Davida Foy Crabtree, conference minister in Connecticut, was interviewed by religion reporter Gus Neibuhr of The New York Times on the UCC connection to the Amistad event. An interesting bi-product of the Times article developed, says Crabtree. She was contacted by John Leigh, the ambassador to the United States from Sierra Leone, the homeland of the 53 Mendi captives on the Amistad. Leigh had been unaware of the UCC connection to the Amistad event until he read the article. He requested educational packets on the UCC's role in helping the Mendi people, which he will use in telling the story to the people of Sierra Leone. With help from the Board for Homeland Ministries and the Office of Communication, Crabtree was able to oblige. The conference office has copies of the packet available.

In addition, thanks to the article, Crabtree was the keynoter at an Amistad student conference on March 5. The event was part of a multi-week project, "Amistad Issues and Beyond," sponsored by four school systems in Connecticut's Fairfield County.

CAN I QUOTE YOU? — The following proverbs, seen on the Internet, were collected by a first grade teacher over the course of the school year. She gave her classes part of an old proverb and let them fill in the rest. Enjoy!

- As you shall make your bed so shall you ... *mess it up.*
- Better to be safe than ... *punch a 5th grader.*
- Strike while the ... *bug is close.*
- It's always darkest before ... *daylight savings time.*
- Never underestimate the power of ... *termites.*
- No news is ... *impossible.*
- A miss is as good as a ... *Mr.*
- You can't teach an old dog new ... *math.*
- If you lie down with the dogs, you'll ... *stink in the morning.*
- Love all, trust ... *me.*
- The pen is mightier than the ... *pigs.*
- An idle mind is ... *the best way to relax.*
- Where there's smoke, there's ... *pollution.*
- A penny saved is ... *not much.*
- Laugh and the whole world laughs with you, cry and ... *you have to blow your nose.*
- Children should be seen and not ... *spanked or grounded.*
- If at first you don't succeed ... *get new batteries.*
- You get out of something what you ... *see pictured on the box.*
- There is no fool like ... *Aunt Edie.*



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INTERNET CHURCH SHOPPING — Looking for a local UCC church in a specific town or state? Thanks to "Find a Congregation," a new utility on the UCC website, the information is now just a mouse click away.

To use "Find a Congregation," one need only go to the UCC home page — www.ucc.org — click on the "Find a Congregation" button, and then type in a zip code, city or state. Local UCC churches in the given area will be listed. Adding to the convenience, a map can be generated, pinpointing the exact location of a specific church.

The website utility, called a search engine, is a project of the Research Office of the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries. The goal of the project, says Web steward Andy Lang, is to provide instantaneous resources for people without a church home, those who might be searching for a new church, or traveling UCC members.

Congregations can update their posted data — including addresses, phone numbers, URLs and e-mail information — by contacting Lara Parker, Research Associate, UCBHM, 216/736-3819; e-mail <parkerl@ucc.org>.

— UCN, 3/98

SCRIPTURE PROJECT GETS RESULTS — More than 1,650 local UCC congregations have responded to a denomination-wide Bible study and survey, says the Rev. Leah Matthews of the UC Board for Homeland Ministries.

Each participating church in the "Scripture Project" is responsible for doing a Bible study and filling out a survey questionnaire. The study must be completed and the surveys returned by May 30, 1998. The results will be published as a report to the UCC's General Synod in 1999.

The study materials have specific passages from Genesis, Nehemiah, Matthew, John, Acts and Philippians. The accompanying survey asks questions about the specific scriptures, but also helps people begin to think about the authority and interpretation of the Bible in their lives.

HOW WILL RESTRUCTURE AFFECT YOUR CHURCH? — UCC church leaders gathered Feb. 14 in Columbus, Ohio, for a Town Hall meeting on the restructure of the national offices. The meeting included two panel discussions, and featured such guests as Elizabeth Aguilar, associate minister, Hispanic Community UCC, Boston; Penny Wung Burgoon, member, North Congregational UCC, Columbus, Ohio; the Rev. Arthur Lawrence Cribbs Jr., executive director of the Office of Communication; the Rev. Thomas E. Dipko, executive vice president of the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries; Bernice Powell Jackson, executive director of the Commission for Racial Justice; the Rev. Paul H. Sherry, UCC president; the Rev. Henry Simmons, pastor of St. Alban's Congregational UCC in Queens, N.Y.; the Rev. Lyle Weible, conference minister of the Penn Central Conference; and the Rev. Robert D. Witham, executive coordinator for structural transition.

A videotape of the meeting, "Restructure — A UCC Town Hall," is currently available for \$15. The video is a great discussion starter for church groups wishing to examine the effects of restructuring. To order, or for more information, contact the Rev. Robert D. Witham, 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115; 216/736-2105; e-mail <withamr@ucc.org>.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW FOR RCC 2000 — The Religious Communication Congress 2000, "Faith stories in a changing world," will be here before you know it. The international, multi-faith forum for religious communicators takes place March 29-April 1, 2000, at the Chicago Marriott Downtown, and it's not too early to start thinking about attending!

The conference is being planned and hosted by North American faith groups, including the UCC, with special focus on more effective global communication of religion through spoken, electronic, cyberspace, written and artistic faith stories. For more information, contact RCC 2000, 475 Riverside Dr., Room 1948A, New York, NY 10115; 212/870-2985; FAX 212/870-3578; on the Web: <www.RCC2000.org>.